

The agreement includes the House provision.

*Removal of requirement for one year of participation in certain medical and lifestyle incentive programs of the Department of Defense to receive benefits under such programs (sec. 719)*

The Senate amendment contained a provision (sec. 725) that would amend section 729 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-328) to remove the requirement for 1 year of participation in certain medical and lifestyle incentive programs before an eligible beneficiary could receive benefits under such programs.

The House bill contained no similar provision.

The agreement includes the Senate provision.

*Department of Defense standards for exemptions from mandatory COVID-19 vaccines (sec. 720)*

The House bill contained a provision (sec. 720) that would require the Secretary of Defense to establish uniform procedures under which servicemembers may be exempted from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine for administrative, medical, or religious reasons, including on the basis of possessing an antibody test demonstrating previous infection.

The Senate amendment contained no similar provision.

The agreement includes the House provision with an amendment that would require the Secretary of Defense to establish uniform standards under which servicemembers may be exempted from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine for administrative, medical, or religious reasons.

In establishing uniform standards for medical exemptions, we expect the Department of Defense to review the scientific literature to determine, to the extent possible, whether a previous COVID-19 infection may induce sustained antibody protection (natural immunity) against SARS-CoV-2, thereby potentially eliminating a requirement for a vaccine. We also expect the Department to include eligibility timelines for consideration of exemptions for servicemembers nearing separation and retirement in the development of uniform procedures relating to administrative exemptions.

*Establishment of centers of excellence for enhanced treatment of ocular injuries (sec. 721)*

The Senate amendment contained a provision (sec. 723) that would require the Secretary of Defense to establish, not later